

**Department of Commerce
Occupational Safety and Health Program
Report**



July 2005

**Department of Commerce
Office of Occupational Safety and Health
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Executive Summary

The monthly Occupational Safety and Health report provides leaders and managers with an overview of the effectiveness of the Department's Occupational Safety and Health program. The report is based on the latest available data for the Department derived from employee compensation claims and measures the Department's progress towards meeting the goals of the White House Safety, Health, and Return-to-Employment (SHARE) initiative.

This report briefly addresses work to move to a Department accident reporting system. Currently this monthly report relies on workers' compensation data for analysis. The new move will analyze accidents and include workers' compensation data.

The cost of accidents as shown by Workers' Compensation Claims continues a downward trend and appears to be slowing in the mid \$14M range. In contrast, the cost for employee continuation of pay continues to increase.

Workers' Compensation Claim Data tell us that the Total Recordable Case Incidence Rate is down from previous years. The rate is also down for the third month in a row. The monthly total recordable case incident rate is 0.98 in June of Fiscal Year 2005 compared to 1.35 in June of Fiscal Year 2004.

The Department of Labor has not published updated data for the SHARE goals. Because of this the Department does not have any current data on the status. However, prior to this data submission the Department was doing better than three of the four goals.

The health topics for this month are preventing obesity and sunburns. Both of which are applicable to Department employees and their families.

July Report

Purpose. To provide managers and leaders within the Department of Commerce with information about the effectiveness of the Department's Occupational Safety and Health program. This report is based on the latest available accident data for the Department derived from employee compensation claims. Wellness information is also provided to assist employees in preparing for the summer season. The Office of Occupational Safety and Health will publicize the hazards and recommendations in this report using the Department's web page. They will also work with bureau safety offices to further analyze the data and implement recommendations as appropriate for each bureau.

Discussion.

Accident Reporting. The Office of Occupational Safety and Health is in the process of reviving the accident reporting system for the Department. The accident log for Calendar Year 2004 is partially complete and work is also being done for Calendar Year 2005. This log will be maintained by calendar year in accordance with the new changes to 29 CFR Part 1904 that changes federal agency reporting to coincide with the private sector reporting requirements. Calendar Year 2004 will be the base year for this data. The data is incomplete and trend analysis can not be done for this month's report.

Worker's Compensation Claims Analysis. Workers' Compensation Claim Data tell us that the Total Recordable Case Incidence Rate is down from previous years. The rate is also down for the third month in a row. The monthly total recordable case incident rate is 0.98 in June of Fiscal Year 2005 compared to 1.35 in June of Fiscal Year 2004.

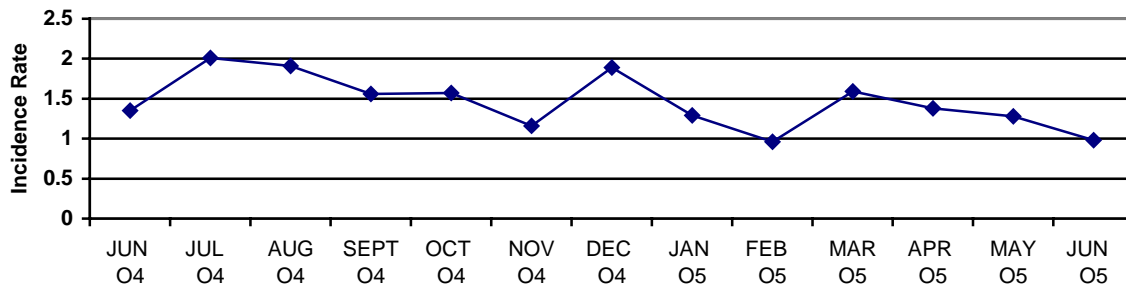


Figure 1. Monthly Total Recordable Workers' Compensation Case Incident Rate Trend

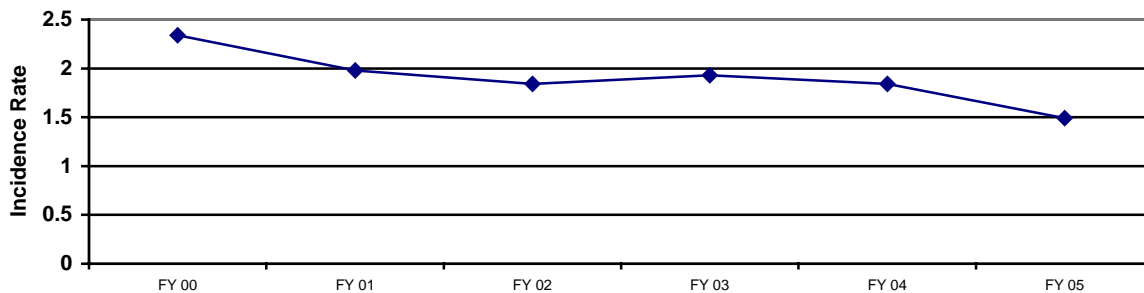


Figure 2. Total Workers' Compensation Case Incident Rate Trend

Figure 3 shows virtually no change in the types of accidents that occurred in Fiscal Year 2004. The three main accident types that account for most of the accidents unfortunately are considered by safety and loss control professionals to be the most difficult to control and eliminate.

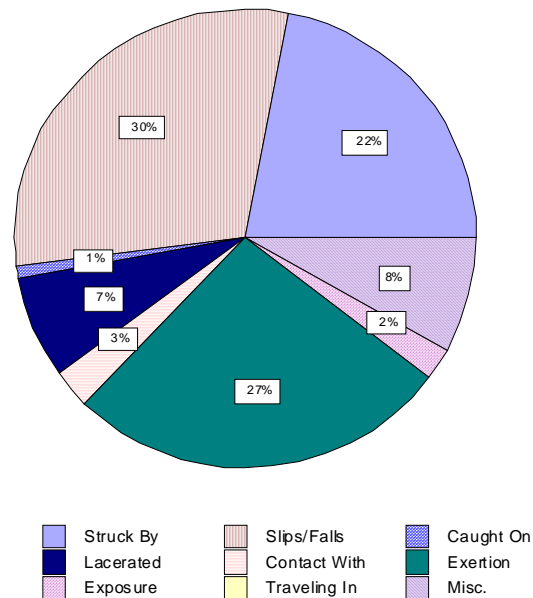


Figure 3. Workers' Compensation Claims by type for first three quarters of Fiscal Year 2005.

Workers Compensation Claims Management Initiatives.

The Office of Occupational Safety and Health has analyzed the claims within the Office of the Secretary. As a result action is being taken for three of the claims to clarify the current status the employee and potentially return them to work. In addition, a cost break down was done to show what each office within the Office of the Secretary spends for claims based on the employees injured.

Work continues on a database of all workers' compensation cases for the Department. Quarterly reviews of the Social Security death roles are being conducted to identify claimants who may have died.

Department of Labor Initiative. On January 9, 2004, President Bush announced the Safety, Health and Return-to-Employment (SHARE) Initiative directing federal agencies to establish goals and track performance in four major areas. Federal agencies were charged with lowering workplace injury and illness case rates, lowering lost-time injury and illness case rates, improving timely reporting of injuries and illnesses, and reducing lost days resulting from work injuries and illnesses. An incident has occurred with the data for this system and the results of the Department work towards these goals is unknown at this time. However, prior information indicated that the Department was doing better than the goals for improved timeliness of claims reporting, reduced number of claims, and reduced number of lost time claims.

Health and Wellness. There are two topics for this month's health and wellness. Sunburn and

obesity, both of which can have an effect on Department employees quality of life.

Sunburn.

Causes. A sunburn is literally a burn on the skin from ultraviolet (UV) radiation. Sunburns are caused by exposure to the sun with injuries possible with as little as 30 minutes of exposure. The consequence of this burn is inflammation of the skin that can result in permanent damage and has been linked to causing skin cancer.

Prevention.

- Do not sunbathe. However, if one must use a sunscreen with a protection factor of at least 15.
- Avoid unnecessary sun exposure during peak hours, between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.
- When exposed to sunlight, wear protective clothing such as long pants, long-sleeved shirts, brimmed hats, and UV-protective sunglasses.
- Stay away from artificial tanning devices.
- Damage that leads to adult skin cancers starts in childhood. Teach your children good sun protection habits at an early age.

Treatment

- Treat the sunburn as you would a first or second degree burn. Basically that is what the sunburn is. However, for sunburns that are third degree with blistering and severe discomfort seek medical attention immediately.
- In some severe cases of sunburn the victim may suffer shock, if so treat for shock if necessary.
- Cool victim as rapidly as possible by applying cool damp cloths or immerse in cool, not cold water.
- Victims of sunburn may also be dehydrated. Provide them cool water to drink as long as the victim is not vomiting.

Obesity

Cause. Obesity is caused by a large quantity of body fat on the body that is much greater than an individual should have. A person is obese when their body mass index (BMI) is over 30. BMI is a mathematical calculation used to determine whether a patient is overweight. To get a calculation one must divide a person's body weight by height. The Center for Disease Control states a BMI of:

- 18.5 to 24.9 indicates normal weight

- 25 to 29.9 indicates overweight
- 30 or over indicates obesity

To calculate a BMI, go to www.cdc.nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/index.htm. Some people with a BMI over 30 may have muscle mass, not fat. Excess weight, regardless of whether it is muscle or fat can cause health conditions. The diseases and conditions related to obesity include:

- Breast Cancer
- Colon Cancer
- Gallbladder Disease
- Hypertension
- Heart Disease
- Physical Disability
- Respiratory Problems
- Sleep apnea
- Type 2 diabetes.

Prevention

Preventing obesity means controlling one's weight to that of a weight that is appropriate for one's height.

It is important to contact a physician to verify obesity and identify ways that weight can be lost and a better lifestyle developed.

To lose or maintain a normal weight, stay physically active, reduce calorie intake, eat fruits and vegetables daily, cut back on high sugar foods like desserts and soft drinks.

Future health and wellness topics will include:

August 2005 – Preventing rape and successful smoking cessation

September 2005 – Health affects of Hypothermia and preventing colds and flu

October 2005 – Winter Cold and Flu Season

November 2005 – Dress to Stay Warm

December 2005 – Preventing alcohol abuse and drinking and driving.